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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

NATO EXPANSION – THE STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE FULL PARTNERSHIP

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

NATO Expansion - The Struggle to Achieve Full Partnership

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ABSTRACT

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If NATO is to continue to be successful as a security guarantor, it must adapt itself to the current geo-political realities of today's European landscape. Membership expansion is clearly a key element of NATO's strategy in achieving this goal. Recently, invitations to join NATO have been extended to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. The Madrid Conference was just the beginning of a long and arduous process that will hopefully culminate in full partnership for these fledgling candidate nations. Initially these countries will be unable to fulfill their commitments as fully contributing partners. Their formal entrance into NATO will occur in April, 1999, but it will take at least 15-20 years to complete the transition from cold war opponents to fully capable alliance members.

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NATO EXPANSION - THE STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE FULL PARTNERSHIP

NATO's membership must expand if it is to survive as
Europe's collective security apparatus. In accordance with
Article 10, of the North Atlantic Treaty, "...the Alliance will
continue to welcome new members in a position to further the
principles of the Treaty and contribute to security in the EuroAtlantic area." There are currently twelve Eastern and Central
European countries that have made formal application to join
NATO. As a result of the Madrid Conference in July, 1997,
invitations were only extended to Poland, the Czech Republic, and
Hungary. These invitations were clearly proffered out of both
political and military necessity after more than seven years of
diplomatic soul searching by the current NATO members.

Although Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are eagerly looking forward to joining NATO next year, they will initially be unable to fulfill their commitments as fully contributing partners. Significant problems exist in force modernization, interoperability, training programs, NCO development, and English language proficiency. The Madrid Conference was the first step in a long and arduous journey, that will hopefully culminate in the achievement of full partnership for these fledgling candidate nations. When they are admitted to NATO next year, it will not

be on a equal footing with current members (which could take as much as 15-20 years). The transition from old Soviet style militaries to a much higher NATO standard of performance will not be complete when these countries sign the North Atlantic Treaty. Once the welcome ceremonies are over the struggle to achieve full partnership will begin for NATO's newest members.

The road that they must now travel will be expensive both in the expenditure of political capital and national treasure.

These new member states must now earnestly design and execute viable plans and procedures that will gain them acceptance into NATO as fully capable members. The true measure of their success will be a significantly enhanced European security environment. They must be able to adequately support Article 5 (an attack against one is an attack against all) of the NATO charter and effectively contribute to the out of area operations that will continue to appear on NATO's agenda well into the next millenium.

The timetable for meeting the accession protocols is very aggressive and calls for the acceptance of these countries as members by NATO's fiftieth anniversary in April, 1999. This goal may be politically possible but will realistically prove to be unachievable both in the defense planning process and NATO's integrated military structure. The present low levels of unit baseline collective task proficiencies indicate that a period of

at least 15-20 years will be required to achieve an acceptable NATO standard. Individual task proficiency is relatively high towards the end of a conscript's period of service, but his unit's ability to execute collective tasks is highly perishable. The result is adequately trained individuals/small units and units larger than company size that are unable to execute more complex collective tasks. However, all three of these newly invited states have participated to a great extent in the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). Fortunately, these efforts have allowed them to make initial adjustments in terms of interoperability with NATO forces and has exposed them to NATO's standard operating procedures.

OBSTACLES

The key hurdles to overcome on the way to full membership are leaving PfP behind, ratification of the Protocols, modernization, establishment of professional military structures, interoperability, and deployment capabilities that can quickly bring these forces to bear in future hotspots. Some other challenges facing these candidates will be: English language training, development of a career NCO corps, and enhanced capabilities to host the reception of NATO reinforcements

(similar to the current Hungarian support to SFOR in Tzar, Hungary).

Under the umbrella of NATO force planning, which provides an analysis of structure requirements, the new members will have to meet targets in accordance with NATO Force Goals that are based on Ministerial Guidance. Additionally, they will be required to complete their performance evaluation in the form of the annual Defense Planning Questionnaire based on target force goals.²

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

As the historical record indicates, there have been many different reasons and rationale for expanding (or to use current terminology - enlarging) NATO's membership. As a result of the NATO summit meeting in January, 1994, the Alliance announced the creation of the Partnership for Peace program. Although this program was not an invitation to join NATO, it did informally initiate the process of inclusion in the minds of at least twelve potential new members. The current PfP program has in many ways served as a litmus test for determining which countries will be the next to join. According to Jeffrey Simon, the key ingredient for NATO membership has always been the substance in the security

enhancements that each prospective member brings to the table. The situation has never been one of charity but rather one of "quid pro quo". It is clearly evident that, "NATO's... history not only shows no barriers to its enlargement, but also makes clear the pragmatic bases for membership. From the alliance's inception in 1949 the criteria had been the contributions the applicant would make to the security of the West in the broadest sense."

The NATO hopeful members of the PfP program were not overjoyed with the prospects of participating in this venture, but clearly recognized its value as a way to begin security relations with the West. In the absence of a clear road map, to follow for acceptance into NATO, the PfP program was the only path that seemed to lead to the overall objective. The Polish foreign minister represented the feelings of his Central European brothers when he remarked that PfP was, "...too small a step in the right direction." Also central to the idea of joining NATO was the establishment of expansion guidelines and criteria that would be applied to measure candidates. Beyond the logical step of entering the PfP program these suitors would also be subjected to a close examination of their embryonic democratic

institutions, economies, and records in the area of human rights violations.

Most importantly though would be the degree to which they had established civilian oversight and control of their respective military organizations. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have all succeeded in this area by embracing the concept of civilian control. NATO viewed this issue in four areas: a well articulated division of authority, parliamentary budget and deployment control, establishment of peacetime leadership through civilian defense ministries, and finally the restoration of the public confidence in these militaries to defend their homelands. Obviously a great deal of work has been done in all of these areas by Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.⁵

RATIFICATION

The elements of uncertainty and delay in the ratification process could also have a detrimental effect on initial military preparations to join NATO. The debate on NATO enlargement will now rage on in all of the member's capitals. All eyes will be on the United States congress for indications of any reluctance to

ratify a modified North Atlantic Treaty. The lack of firm U.S. resolve to back the admission of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary as alliance members would cripple or perhaps derail the entire effort. Prominent issues for the U.S. going into the debate on ratification are: whether or not more U.S. troops will have to be stationed on European soil, concerns about the Article 5 commitments, and what impacts (if any) there will be with respect to Russia. Finally, it appears that the key ratification issue, as always, will be money - what is the bottomline cost? Whatever the outcome of the cost analysis, it will be more important to answer the question - is it worth it? Age-old arguments about burden-sharing will surface and it is clear that there will be no free ride for the new members.

Extensive hearings took place before Congress recessed in late 1997, and more will be undertaken when the new Congress convenes in early 1998. Zbigniew Brzezinski's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee represented the view of many supporters of enlargement. He states, "In my view, enlargement has global significance. It is central to the step-by-step construction of a secure international system in which the Euroatlantic Alliance plays the major role in ensuring that a peaceful and democratic Europe is America's principal partner."

We are entering into uncharted waters that will cause the U.S. to step out of its' political comfort zone and direct leadership position in the Alliance. The problem as defined by Henry Kissinger is that, "America has never been part of an international order that it could neither dominate nor withdraw from...the European Union is only at the beginning of extracting a common policy from nations that have, ...aimed their strategies at each other."

Critics of expansion will focus on America's potential out of pocket expenses required to pay for enlargement. The European's generally see the initiative as one that America has pushed and by default will finance. Michael Mandelbaum has warned that, "The refusal of the European's to bear what Americans will regard as their fair share of the burden will inevitably lead to...a quarrel that would weaken the Atlantic Alliance far more than expanding NATO could conceivably strengthen it." The other key objection to expansion is that it is simply not necessary. Proponents of this view insist that, "...what Eastern European countries most want and most need is a form of membership in the Western community that provides support for growing economic, social and political structures." The issue is one of confusing a military security organization with

these structures (mixing apples and oranges). NATO purists will insist that enlargement creates more frictions and problems than it is worth.

The real wild card in ratification discussions will be

Russia and what they may or may not do in reaction to the

expansion of NATO. The NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed in

Paris last year in an attempt to avert a potentially dangerous

rift from developing between NATO and Russia. The Founding Act

established a Permanent Joint Council (PJC) which would focus on

cooperation activities and an on-going dialogue of engagement.

By holding the Russians closer through the PJC it will be like

two boxers embracing in the ring (neither able to throw a punch).

There are however worries that this consulting relationship will

potentially lead to Russia exercising excessive influence in the

affairs of the NATO members. These fears should be set aside by

a strong North Atlantic Council that does not allow a broadening

of the PJC focus and influence in key strategy policy debates. 10

Whatever measures are taken, Russia's reaction will continue to be a source of great concern to the Alliance. Currently the Russian focus is necessarily on the domestic scene - this will not always be the case. The eventual recovery of the Russian economy will surely promote greater interest in what might

potentially be seen as an enlarged and threatening NATO on the border.

MILITARY REFORMS

Efforts to modernize the militaries of these candidate nations will obviously be closely linked to the cost debate. The old Soviet equipment, structure and doctrine will require extensive overhaul to meet NATO standards. All three of these countries have begun to modernize but Poland has set itself on a model course of action to achieve these objectives. The Poles have established a fifteen year modernization plan which will initially be guided, in its execution, by a detailed five year defense budget estimate and a, "...general forecast of military expenditure in the following decade."

Key modernization areas addressed in their planning are: combat equipment, force structure, command and control, improved operational readiness, and rapid reaction units readily available for deployment. Also included in the package will be improvements to basing and reception structure required to support the staging and follow on deployment of NATO reinforcements. As noted by the Hungarian Minister for Foreign

Affairs, "We must continue the reform and modernization of the military, achieving further progress in interoperability and compatibility." Pledges to modernize will not be enough, the effort will require an enormous amount of funding that will probably not be forthcoming in the near term. Cash that is available will in all likelihood be used to bolster the emerging capitalist market economies that are being established in Eastern Europe.

Domestic production of war related items will be minimal,
"Although the ECE [East Central European] states produce some
weapons and support vehicles on their home soil, they will need
to acquire a fair amount of equipment from abroad. This
especially is the case for modern combat aircraft, which will
dominate the cost of modernization programs."

The purchase of
these required items of equipment from Western sources will be at
relatively expensive prices. In light of the fact that these
countries do not have deep enough pockets to purchase this
equipment, it will be "provided" by the NATO membership in the
form of loans and contributions to the overall cost of expansion.
Eventually, the standard NATO methods of determining each
member's burden sharing will determine the new members level of
fiscal expenditures.

The SFOR mission in Bosnia has provided an excellent opportunity for all three candidates to get on course with standard NATO operating procedures. Serious equipment incompatibilities and deficiencies have been highlighted as a result of working shoulder to shoulder with these countries in a real world mission. Not surprisingly, communications gear has been a major area of concern that will require expensive modernization to become compatible with NATO, particularly in the area of encryption and decryption devices for sensitive information. Technical training for both operators and maintainers will be required to bring these countries up to speed in all relevant signal related areas.

Command and control (C2) will be directly linked to each military's ability to communicate not only with its' own forces but more importantly with fellow coalition partners. Current levels of sophistication in this area are woefully lacking and dangerously inept. The future conflicts that will confront NATO require decentralized leadership that is able to control decentralized execution of mission type orders. The platoon commander of the future must be able to act quickly based on his mission and understanding of his commander's intent (a radical departure from the Soviet style of command and control).

NATO has adopted the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) organization for use in the development of operational level headquarters. The current SFOR headquarters in Sarajevo is set up under this model and staffed with officers, NCOs, and soldiers from every nation participating in the deployment. Key to the success of this effort has been the high level of cooperation and interoperability in the execution of well-understood and practiced staff procedures. The coalition partners have not had to "learn by doing", they were able to quickly get up and running as a direct result of standard procedures and combined exercises. Standard procedures are not enough to ensure success, required practice in the form of combined and joint training has been clearly evident in the case of Bosnia. The efficiencies that have been achieved in this example are largely attributable to NATO's realistic training exercises which are executed to a high standard. Allies can only hope to achieve near flawless execution after many years of integrated training.

In the case of these new members, the U.S. Army's "crawl, walk, and run" method of training may be the best and most simple route to success. This methodology is a three-part framework for training that ensures a uniform understanding of the task, conditions, and overall performance standards. Although it seems

simple enough, most of the frustrations encountered in a combined environment are directly related to misinterpretations of the task to be performed. Thanks to active participation in the PfP program these newly invited members are already at high levels of the "crawl" phase. They at least understand the task to be performed, the conditions under which they must perform the task, and the standard that they must be able to achieve. difficult part of this training methodology is moving quickly through the walk phase and to be able to sustain a "running" level of task execution over the long haul. This will be particularly difficult as long as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary continue to rely heavily on short periods of conscription to fill their ranks. The learning curve can only be dampened by sustainment training and retention of well trained soldiers, NCOs, and officers.

The first PfP peacekeeping exercise in the U.S. (Cooperative Nugget) was conducted with platoon size organizations from eighteen countries in the summer of 1995, at Fort Polk, LA. The tasks to be performed at the squad/platoon level were basic, fairly straight forward, and easily understood by the participants. They were all able to move to the "walk" phase with relative ease and only encountered problems when they hit the "run" or full up phase of training. The areas requiring

improvement in the culminating FTX were for the most part related to the lack of sufficient interoperating experience among the participants in collective training tasks. These deficiencies were evident to the participants and served to reinforce the necessity and value of frequent integrated training at all levels. No amount of visiting training teams and instruction can substitute for the value of collective training that is enhanced and honed to a keen edge by challenging combined exercises.

The exercise drove home the point that achieving top-notch execution will take years of hard work and combined training.

Additionally, most American participants had difficulty displaying a great deal of patience and perseverance in working with many of these countries. The fact that it was not easy for some participants to move to the "run" level of task execution was a source of great frustration to many American players in the exercise. Our fellow European allies are more understanding in this regard and we should learn to take their lead in this area. Combined training with NATO's newest members will be a fact of life for the U.S. military and overcoming our own cultural impatience will be the key to our success in these endeavors.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

A central ingredient in the recipe for successful integration will be English language proficiency. Language training has taken off as a growth industry in all of these countries. Every candidate for membership realizes that as, "...units are nominated to NATO's integrated military structure, their whole command and staff personnel will have to possess a satisfactory knowledge of English. 15 This will be particularly tough for these former Soviet territories who have invested years of study in their native language as well as Russian. problem is compounded by the fact that senior officers will probably not be retrained to speak fluent English. Their level of interest is minimal and directly related to the difficult task of learning a new language as an older adult. Old dogs can learn new tricks, but only if they want to learn them. The incentive for older officers to learn English is almost non-existent.

Most initial English language training efforts will logically focus on young officers and cadets. Today we see a large number of these young people acting as interpreters for their seniors both at high level meetings and in the field on operational deployments. These interpreters are normally company

grade officers with minimal time on active duty. It is reasonable to project that these fluent linguists will take 10-15 years to rise through the ranks and replace their seniors. Only then will a sufficient number of English speakers populate the armed forces with a deep enough language capability to get the job done as a full-fledged NATO partner.

Exchange programs coupled with an aggressive exercise schedule will be needed, not only to enhance interoperability but also the development and sustainment of English language speakers (the old adage "use it or lose it" definitely applies in this area). Emphasis will need to be placed on active listening and speaking skills. Although communications are frequently accomplished today by computer data/image transfer, voice communications still play an important role on the battlefield. This is particularly true in the case of "peacekeeping" or operations other than war. Real time information must be passed quickly and accurately to key decision-makers, mistakes in nuance and translation could easily lead to grave consequences for the troops on the ground. Delays caused by linguistic deficiencies and confusion could conceivably derail an otherwise successful effort.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN NCO CORPS

A glaring deficiency noted in all of these potential new member states is the lack of a professional NCO corps (such as those found in the military structures of current members). The old Soviet style of leadership with little or no link between officers and conscripts will simply not work. Successful integration into NATO must be built on the solid foundation of a professional NCO corps. The creation of such a corps of professional career NCOs will require the investment of considerable effort and resources to make it a reality. After a period of initial service (three to five years) applicants recommended for the NCO corps should be screened and selected by a board process.

Professional education in both leadership and technical areas must be a continuous career long process designed to enhance these important abilities. NCOs must be held accountable for the individual training and development of their soldiers. Units at all levels must be well grounded in their basic job related skill sets in order to achieve a high level of collective proficiency. Officers can easily "command" units that are well "run" by first class non-commissioned officers, dedicated to a

high level of professionalism. Armies that rely on officers to do the job of an NCO (the old Warsaw Pact for instance) will ultimately be doomed to costly failures at all levels in the spectrum of conflict. This is particularly true at the operational level where officers are required to centrally design often complex strategies for decentralized execution by proficient tactical units. Successful decentralized execution will heavily depend on the expertise and abilities of the NCO leaders.

Competent NCOs are the key to the overwhelming success of top-notch military organizations around the world. This is particularly true in the case of current NATO members that participate in the military structure. Clearly the successes in Bosnia are in large measure due to the outstanding corps of NCOs that are out in the mud at the tip of the spear, understanding their commander's intent and able to make the correct decision under stressful conditions.

CONCLUSION

The way ahead for both NATO and its potential new members is clearly fraught with many problems and yet unresolved issues.

The deficiencies discussed in this paper will initially prevent

Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary from fulfilling their commitments as fully contributing partners. Near term efforts will not replace the need for a long-term program (15-20 years) aimed at achieving a high level of interoperability and performance capability. These challenges are not insurmountable but will require both diligent and patient efforts on the part of all concerned parties, supporting a new role for NATO in the security of Europe. The raison d'être of the cold war has evaporated and the "Russian bear" is at best no longer a threat or at worst just currently dormant. Whatever the case with respect to Russia, Europe must gird itself for potential security threats wherever they may emerge on the continent or out of area.

An expanded NATO with fully contributing partners will be required to effectively execute the new post cold war strategy. The recent and ongoing situation in Bosnia provides clear and irrefutable evidence that NATO must be involved early in the resolution of problems in violent hotspots. In the case of Bosnia the price for delayed action was the massacre of innocents, who in many ways were the victims of both their indigenous enemies and the largesse of the Western powers.

Security related problems will continue to directly effect the economic arena as well. Stability is the key to economic prosperity and must be guaranteed by a collective security instrument - in this case NATO. This fact is blatantly obvious to Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary (not to mention the other nine applicants for NATO membership). They have all realized that a credible security framework must be established to support the secure environment needed to build a vibrant market economy. These market economies are currently at the fragile beginning stage in the process of replacing the old inefficient command economies of the communist era. The economic maturation process is stifled by lingering concerns about the stability of the region; these worries can only be overcome by the embrace of a newly enlarged NATO.

A newly expanded NATO is the logical means to the desired endstate of a prosperous and stable Europe. The consensus is building to support this notion and in time NATO will become the guarantor of this emerging environment. Clearly, all of the obstacles in the road to full partnership for NATO's newest members will not be overcome or removed in the next year. The greater European security need is met however by the near term inclusion of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Removal of the obstacles will take years of integration and training but in the meantime, the Alliance will be able to travel this new road to a more secure Europe. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary will proudly take their places at the NAC (North Atlantic

Council) table in April, 1999, as NATO begins a new chapter in its' history.

Word Count 4533

ENDNOTES

- Gebhardt von Moltke, "Accession of new members to the Alliance:What are the next steps?," NATO Review (July-August 1997): 9.
 - ² Ibid. 8.
- ³ Jeffrey Simon, <u>NATO Enlargement:Opinions and Options</u> (Washington, D.C.:National Defense University, 1995), 32.
 - ⁴ Ibid., 53.
 - ⁵ Ibid., 58.
- ⁶ Zbigniew Brezinski, "Global Implications for NATO Enlargement," <u>ROA National Security Report</u> (December 1997): 28.
- ⁷ Henry Kissinger, "Expand NATO Now," <u>Washington Post</u>, 19 December 1994, sec. A, p. 27.
- 8 Michael Mandelbaum, "No Clear Strategy For NATO," ROA National Security Report (December 1997): 29.
- 9 Jonathan Dean, "NATO Enlargement is Unnecessary," ROA National Security Report (December 1997): 28.
- ¹⁰ Stephen Cambone, "Will the US Senate endorse NATO's enlargement?," NATO Review (November-December 1997): 15.
- Niels Helveg Petersen, "Towards a European security model for the 21st century," <u>NATO Review</u> (September-October 1997): 6.
 - ¹² Ibid., 6.
- ¹³ Laszlo Kovacs, "Hungary's contribution to European security," NATO Review (September-October 1997): 11.
 - ¹⁴ Simon, 198.
 - 15 Petersen, 7.

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